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Oscar and Mary F. Handlin

DANGER IN DISCORD



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DANGER IN DISCORD

by
OSCAR and MARY F. HANDLIN

*Origins of
Anti-Semitism in
the United States*

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Freedom is more than a word. It is a deeply cherished belief in the essential importance of the person and in the supremacy of a society which respects and safeguards the eminent dignity and integrity of personality.

Freedom is a creative spirit that summons the energies of all men to the task of building the kind of community, the kind of nation, the kind of world in which they want to live. It is a dream of a world in which all men, women, and children are encouraged to grow to their fullest—physically, mentally, spiritually—so that they may fulfill the great promise of their inner potential.

But freedom is more than a belief or a dream. Freedom is also a process; as such it is concerned with means as with ends, seeking through democratic methods to create the good society.

The education of free men to understand their proper role in a free society is basic to such a process. To this task the **FREEDOM PAMPHLET** Series is dedicated.

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IN
DISCORD

Origins of Anti-Semitism in the United States

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OSCAR and MARY F. HANDLIN

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**FREEDOM PAMPHLETS are edited by Frank N. Trager,
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*All your strength is in your union.
All your danger is in discord;
Therefore be at peace henceforward,
And as brothers live together.*

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
(The Song of Hiawatha)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Oscar Handlin received his training in history at Harvard University where he is now Assistant Professor of Social Science. He is the author of "*Boston's Immigrants*" and of numerous articles, specializing in the problems of American ethnic groups. Mary Flug Handlin studied political science at Columbia University and at the London School of Economics. The Handlins have collaborated extensively in writing for the learned journals and, in 1947, published *Commonwealth: a Study of the Role of Government in American Economy*, under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council.

INTRODUCTION

THE manifestations of intolerance and prejudice are everywhere the same. Yet the underlying factors that produce those conditions may differ significantly.

In one sense, the causes of prejudice lie in the nature of the personality of the man who holds the prejudice. But they are also socially determined. Whether the impulses that result in prejudiced behavior shall find expression or not, the form in which they will show themselves, and the object upon which they will fix are products of the time and place in which the individual lives.

On the surface there are many similarities between the forces that produced anti-Semitism in Europe and those which have been operative in the United States. But the differences are even more important than the similarities.

The New World had no medieval past from which to inherit a tradition of hostility to the Jews. By the time large numbers of such people appeared in America there were no invidious legal disabilities to mark out an inferior status for them. Most important of all, the prejudiced here have had to struggle against an important article in the American creed, the faith that the individual was to be judged, and to be treated, on the basis of his own worth, and not in terms of his status, class, race, or religion.

In such inhospitable soil, some varieties of anti-Semitism have, in recent years, struck tenuous roots. The nature of their growth is certainly worth understanding. It is important to recognize the unfavorable conditions in the American environment that nurtured these forms of prejudice. It is equally important to know the favorable conditions that have kept them from spreading. To emphasize the dark aspects would distort the view of the whole; for in the United States, social and economic circumstances have kept alive a tradition of liberty and equality, a tradition which has generally left little room for anti-Semitic prejudices.

In the United States, the Jews are one of many ethnic groups which together participate in the nation's culture. When intolerance raises its head, it rarely discriminates as to targets. Rather, it strikes out blindly against all who are presumed to differ from the arbitrary standards it sets for itself. Anti-Semitism then must be regarded as one of the forms, in itself complex, in which bigotry expresses itself in the United States. Only by first understanding how intolerance in general develops in this country will we understand why that intolerance, from time to time, focuses upon the Jews.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THE first two centuries of American experience were almost completely free of expressions of hostility to the Jews. This favorable condition grew out of the high place held by them in American society and out of the Christian conception of the mission of Israel, widely accepted in the United States.

As late as 1800 there were only a few thousand Jews scattered through the American cities. Their role as merchants and the general cosmopolitan air of the towns in which they lived brought them into close, friendly contact, on equal terms, with their neighbors. In this social environment there was little room for prejudice.

Furthermore, the Christian idea that a remnant of Israel would bear witness to the truth of the gospels also contributed to that favorable position. In the United States there had always been a pronounced millennial feeling, a feeling that the day of final judgment was soon approaching. In the process of salvation, the Jews were to play an important role; their conversion would herald the great day. Naturally they were to be treated in such a manner as would hasten their redemption.

More generally, among Americans, both Jewish and Christian, veneration for the Bible created respect for the people of the Book. The prevailing attitude toward the Jews early

in the nineteenth century was set down by John Adams:

They are the most glorious Nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their Empire were but a Bauble in comparison of the Jews. They have given Religion to three quarters of the Globe and have influenced the affairs of Mankind more, and more happily than any other Nation ancient or modern.

The only problems in the relations of Jews with their neighbors were those that survived from the colonial and English connection of church with state. In some places an established religion was supported by taxpayers' funds; elsewhere religious oaths were prerequisites to voting and to holding office. Atheists, Jews, Catholics and even some Protestant sects were thus discriminated against.

But already in the eighteenth century, the American atmosphere was inhospitable to such anachronistic relics. After 1700 the freedom to worship was almost everywhere recognized; and, year after year, the trends toward religious liberalism grew ever more pronounced.

The revolutionary movement that culminated in Independence also stressed individual rights, including the right to religious equality. Virginia took the lead in this respect, and its example was soon followed by the other states and by the federal government.

The same movement necessarily gave an impetus to the severance of the ties between church and state in such matters as support of religious activities by public funds and clerical control over education. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, the campaign for public education separated from sectarian religious controls had been won; everywhere, then, men of all beliefs stood on an equal footing in the eyes of the law. The struggle for liberty and freedom had given Jews, Catholics, and dissenting Protestants the same rights as other American citizens.

A PEOPLE COMING INTO BEING

THE attitude toward the Jews changed as the nineteenth century advanced, but was then no less favorable than it had been earlier. In fact, it would be more proper to say that there really was no attitude toward the Jews as such in this period.

Americans then thought of themselves as a new folk. They did not regard themselves simply as descendants of one or another of the old nations, but rather as a people that was just coming into being. In the process of evolution, all sorts of men were expected to join on equal terms. Ralph Waldo Emerson hoped that the "Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, and Cossacks, and all the European tribes," would construct here a new race, uniting the best qualities of all the old. The Jews were one of many strains that would enter into the "smelting pot" to contribute to the new and finer culture.

There was some discussion of such questions as the propriety of holding public school sessions on Saturday. But there was no acrimony over the subject. If there were any traces of anti-Semitic prejudices in this period, they were in the realm of the idiomatic slur, figures of speech that described the supposed characteristics of a whole people. Jews, like Yankees, were identified as pedlars, and were often en-

dowed, as a group, with the Yankee pedlars' traits. Every other distinctive group had a similar verbal reputation to live down—the drunken Irishmen, the stingy Germans, the haughty Southerners, the uncouth Westerners.

Such characterizations, heedless though they were, could nevertheless become dangerous. The Irish reputation proved a convenient tool in the hands of Know-Nothing agitators. Similarly, in the heat of the Civil War, General Grant ordered Jewish traders away from the Union lines in terms that reflected upon their loyalty and honesty. Although the command was almost at once rescinded, it illustrated the strength of the impression left by these slurs.

Such incidents were significant for the habits of mind they revealed. But they were more often the products of lazy minds than of intention to discriminate. So, William Dean Howells planned to make one of the unpleasant characters in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* a Jew, but changed his plan when the implications of such a step were called to his attention.

Indeed this situation remained the same as long as the Jews were regarded merely as communicants of another American religion. In view of the prevailing latitudinarianism, the attitude that any religion that taught good morals was good, there could be no overt discrimination on religious grounds without disturbing the delicate balance among all the sects in the United States.

ORIGINS OF AMERICAN RACISM

A genuine threat to the security of America's Jews came only with the development of a new conception of race that could, under the pressure of changing economic and social conditions, become the vehicle of bitter group hatreds. The conception that men were divided into breeds that were biologically different and incapable of fusion ran counter both to the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man and to the American ideal of nationality as a product of the amalgamation of peoples, each contributing their distinctive part to the whole.

Yet, if it clashed with two basic articles of the American creed, the new notion nevertheless had important sources of strength in the American environment. The strains that resulted from the growth of industry and of cities, from the venture into imperialism, sometimes tempted men to think in terms of racial differences, of inferior and superior peoples. And while racist ideas originally sprouted without reference to the Jews, they were quickly applied to them.

The Color Line. Racist expressions had been rare in the first two centuries of settlement in the United States. People of European ancestry were, of course, then conscious of differences between themselves and the Indians and Negroes. But such differences were not regarded as racial, that is, as incapable of modification through cultural contacts and

through intermarriage with the Whites. Even at the opening of the nineteenth century, slaveholders like Thomas Jefferson thought of the Negro problem simply as an economic one that would ultimately be solved by the gradual liberation of the bondsmen.

The first denials of human brotherhood came in the South. Even before the Civil War, the apologists for slavery faced a terrible dilemma. Once the northern abolitionists began to criticize the institution on moral grounds, the slaveholders had to find a moral defense or else witness the crumbling of the labor system on which their society rested.

The defense came in the argument that the Negroes were somehow inherently different, inferior, and that they therefore did not deserve to be treated as free men. George Fitzhugh, a spokesman for the South, attempted to popularize the notion that the "Blacks" were not human beings at all.

After the Civil War, the old legal basis for differentiation between colored and white people was gone; yet the compulsion for finding some other basis of separation was more pronounced. In the crisis of reconstruction, the ruling groups attempted to stay the dissolution of the old order by rallying Whites of all classes against the Negroes. Constant repetition spread the idea that color was a mark of innate difference. Meanwhile Black Codes established a new legal basis for segregation and for discriminatory treatment that acquired a deep hold on the mind of the South.

The virus was not confined to a single region. The South was itself a minority; for many years it was a subject minority policed by federal troops. To preserve their peculiar institution, the spokesmen of the section had to persuade the rest of the nation that they were right. In Congress, in the courts, in politics, and in the less formal channels through which opinion is molded, Southerners used the doctrine of

race to fight the old abolitionist, humanitarian doctrine of equality.

They succeeded in getting the rest of the country passively to agree that the former slave states could maintain their traditional social system by relegating the Negroes to a status of permanently inferior, second-class citizenship. A long line of judicial decisions culminating in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 nullified the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment and bestowed constitutional blessings on the whole pattern of segregation.

Even more significant, the long years of debate made Americans familiar with ideas which would earlier have seemed utterly outlandish. Whether they agreed with the Southerners or not, people became accustomed to thinking in terms of race. Soon it was clear that the arguments developed against the Negroes could easily be applied to other groups.

Thus, in the succession of crises on the Pacific Coast, the Orientals became the butt of racist opposition. First, discontented workingmen participated in a long, violent struggle that ultimately led to the stoppage of all Chinese immigration after 1882. A quarter of a century later, discredited politicians, attempting to divert public attention from their own misdeeds, stirred up a brew of anti-Japanese hatred, the poisonous effects of which lasted long after the corrupt politicians were themselves forgotten.

It is important to note that White immigrants were prominently engaged in both the anti-Chinese and the anti-Japanese movements. In those innocent years it was possible to think of limiting prejudice to a single racial trait, color. But the very same years saw the spread of forces that would give the conception a far wider application.

What Kind of People Shall Americans Be? At the open-

ing of the twentieth century, racist ideas, even in the narrow application, were by no means accepted by all or by a majority of the American people. But discussion within the framework of racist ideas became more frequent. The Spanish-American War, for instance, had made an imperialist power of the United States and had brought it into a new kind of contact with strangers. In the debate over that question there were some who justified the withholding of citizenship from the people of the colonies on the ground that they were inferior and not fit to use the privilege.

There were, in similar vein, men who asserted that not everyone was equally capable of becoming an American. Prescott Hall and the Immigration Restriction League saw the face of the changing country and did not like what they saw. The new industrialism and monster cities had distorted the old standards, had undermined the old values. Unwilling to recognize the true sources for these changes they, in scape-goat fashion, blamed the newcomers who, they charged, lowered the rates of wages, congregated in slums, and perverted, instead of becoming assimilated to, the native institutions.

These conditions appeared in the wake of industrialization in every country, whether it encouraged immigration or not. But the restrictionists failed to recognize that fact. Reluctant or unable to cope with the fundamentals of the new situation, they urged, instead, that the United States choose among those who knocked at the gates of the New World. Instead of admitting all indiscriminately, they wished the nation to select the stocks that could best be grafted on to the "original American tree."

After 1900, a determined campaign for the reversal of the traditional American attitude of free immigration gained currency. The campaign shifted its sights from time to

time. But its ultimate objective remained the same: limitation of admission to the United States to people closely similar to the Anglo-Saxon breed that was assumed to be responsible for American growth.

The campaign gained the support of an influential sector of American labor. It was not that labor supported giving preference to one group of immigrants over another, but that the unions were opposed to immigration in general and especially to immigration of unskilled labor. They opposed it on the false theory that immigrant labor depressed wage levels and was difficult to organize.

Organized labor, although it included among its members large numbers of persons of immigrant stock, joined with the American Legion and other "protectionists" in supporting the restrictive policy legislated in 1924. It was not until after the close of World War II that organized labor, and later the American Legion, revised their stands and came out in support of the admission of substantial numbers of displaced persons to the United States.

The arguments used to prove the necessity of closing the gates have remained with us to this day. To show that further immigration was undesirable, the restrictionist had to fly in the face of history; after all, America *was* the product of immigration. The proponents of the new policy accomplished that feat by arguing that the immigrants then applying for admission were different in kind, and inferior to, those who had come in earlier. The old immigrants, they mistakenly asserted, were northwestern, blond, Teutonic, Protestant; the new, southeastern, dark, Slavic-Latin, Semitic, and non-Protestant.

The Jews, then migrating in large numbers, were usually comprehended in the general condemnation of the "new" immigrants. So, William Z. Ripley, a liberal social scientist,

shivered at the thought of the flood of Polish-Jewish human beings which threatened to inundate the country. On the other hand, N. S. Shaler, a restrictionist geologist, would have admitted the Jews, reckoning that their "racial traits" of quickness and intelligence would stand the country in good stead.

This division of opinion was indicative of the uncertainty of attitudes toward the Jews. In good faith, a restrictionist in Boston could ask Louis D. Brandeis to join in the anti-immigrant campaign. Whether the new conception of race, clearly intolerant as far as Latins and Slavs were concerned, was also strong enough to break down the old tolerance toward Jews was still a moot question.

Imported Poisons. Part of the answer was supplied by contributions from abroad. American intellectual life had never been isolated from that of the Old World; and, with respect to ideas of race too, there was an important exchange of ideas.

European racial thinking, closer to a medieval past, aimed clearly at the Jew, everywhere in the minority, and in some places still not endowed with the full rights of citizenship. Americans, informally, and through their government, had often protested when that anti-Semitism expressed itself in pogroms and in discriminatory measures. But the very waves of indignation thus aroused, familiarized the New World with the Old World's picture of the Jew.

The Beiliss Case offered a signal example. When the age-old blood libel was raised by czarist agents, the whole civilized world was shocked and moved to protest. The publicity helped to secure the acquittal of the brickmaker of Kiev. But it also carried the libel to every corner of the United States and planted vicious seeds that would bear fruit in Georgia a few years later.

All too soon, the subtler intellectual expressions of that European prejudice found an audience on this side of the ocean. Three anti-Semitic theorists in particular were attentively read in the United States. The work of Ernest Renan had a poetic attraction that coated the bitter prejudices it contained. The writings of the Count Gobineau had a spurious appearance of scientific objectivity. And the massive volumes of Houston Stewart Chamberlain seemed to draw upon all the resources of modern scholarship for their arguments. These were the sources from which perilous misconceptions flowed.

From the works of Renan, Americans learned to think of a "Semitic spirit" constant through the ages, not subject to national and cultural influences and often hostile to them. From Gobineau and from his disciple, Lapouge, they acquired an acquaintance with the "Aryan" race, the presumed fount, since the origins of modern times, of all the elements of western civilization. Chamberlain supplied the synthesis; he laid down a scheme that interpreted all of modern history in terms of an elemental conflict between the "Aryan" and the Semite, between the forces of strength and weakness, of idealism and materialism, of nobility and servility.

Directly and indirectly, these ideas flowed into the currents of American thought. They were by no means fully absorbed, or consciously accepted. But they left definable traces in the minds of thousands of Americans. For the way had already been cleared for the reception of these dogmas. Consciousness of color, product of reconstruction, of Oriental settlement, and of imperialism, and consciousness of nationality, product of immigration in an industrial era, meshed with the doctrines of the European theorists. Together they produced an American racial ideology.

An Ideology for Racism. By the time the first World War

added its own peculiar complexities to the problem, there was a noticeable though inchoate tendency generally to think in racial terms in the United States, and specifically to regard the Jews as a race apart. Furthermore, that trend had acquired an intellectual frame of reference and a good deal of its vocabulary from the innocent work of sociologists and anthropologists. For these thinkers, in pursuit of their own inquiries, blundered into a line of thought that was a godsend to the racist.

Sociology is a discipline of recent origin in the United States. The earliest scholars who entered that field did so through an analysis of practical problems. That is, they were drawn to the subject by dealing with such questions as poverty, crime, housing, the family, and religion, in a concrete way. They tended on the basis of these specific problems to generalize concerning the nature of society and of social institutions.

Anyone who studied poverty, crime, or housing in the United States in these years, could not help but notice that ethnic elements were important in those questions. Since immigrants and Negroes occupied the worst quarters in the great cities, and held the poorest paying jobs, they were particularly likely to become cases for the social workers and subjects of what the sociologist called social pathology.

The student of those problems always faced the choice of deciding whether those ills were the products of the American society in which these ethnic groups lived, or whether they were due to some innate weakness in the minority groups themselves. And since American social theorists were influenced by all the racist forces that played upon their contemporaries, all too many of these scholars preferred to see the source of the evil not in themselves but in others. Frederick A. Bushee, for instance, who was not the worst

offender, could write as if the Italians, by nature, liked dirt and crowded quarters.

Such interpretations were simplified by a free-and-easy use of statistics, which could be made to show all sorts of correlations between immigrants and every social evil under the sun. The forty-two volume report of the United States Immigration Commission in 1911 was particularly reprehensible in this kind of sin because it was backed by the authority of the government.

Most of the sociologists were also reformers. After analyzing the diseases of the community, they went on to suggest remedies. They were in this respect followers of Lester Ward, often termed the founder of American sociology. From him they got the idea of social planning, the belief that natural forces should not be left to operate alone, but should be controlled by society.

The immigrants and the Negroes often did not allow themselves to be controlled toward ends they did not understand. Sometimes the concrete, visible favors of the party boss were more attractive than the reformers' future promises. Not infrequently the sociologists and social workers who started out to do good for the immigrant, ended up by hating him because he would not allow good to be done him.

The ultimate extension of planning was eugenics; through that science one could plan a whole society in advance by the selection of the proper future parents. Combining the idea of eugenic selection and innate racial qualities, the great majority of American sociologists in the decade after 1910 reached conclusions, disproved by subsequent research, that definitely marked certain ethnic groups, including the Jews, as inferior and unassimilable. In the ranks of those who wrote in this vein, were such progressive professors as John R. Commons, Edward A. Ross, and Henry Pratt Fairchild.

Let Ross speak for the rest in his description of the "oxlike" immigrants:

ten to twenty per cent are hirsute, lowbrowed, big faced persons of obviously low mentality. . . . I have seen gatherings of foreigners in which narrowed sloping foreheads were the rule. The shortness and smallness of the crania were noticeable. . . . In every face there was something wrong. . . . One might imagine a malicious jinn had amused himself by casting human beings in a set of skew molds discarded by the creator.

These men would no doubt have denied that they were prejudiced; they only wrote and acted as if they were. Their words and deeds were taken as models by thousands of people influenced by the prestige of academic position and of scientific learning. That the professors thought they were being temperate and cautious was not virtue enough. For there were more popular writers ready to throw caution to the winds, who took up the same ideas and gave them more radical expression.

Thus, in 1908 appears Alfred P. Schultz, who publishes a volume called *Race or Mongrel*. The contents are adequately paraphrased in the sub-title: *a Theory that the Fall of Nations is Due to Inter-marriage with Alien Stocks; . . . a Prophecy that America Will Sink to Early Decay Unless Immigration is Rigorously Restricted*. Among the "alien stocks" that threaten "Aryan purity" in the United States were the Jews.

Eight years later, the masterpiece of this school, Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*, sees the light of day. This work which passed through edition after edition proved to hundreds of thousands of horrified "Nordic" Americans that the purity of their great race had been contaminated by contact with inferior breeds, among them the Negroes, the Latins, and the Semite Jews, dwarfed in stature, twisted in

mentality, and ruthless in the pursuit of their own self-interest.

When these ideas were repeated by Lothrop Stoddard in 1920, from the point of view of the eugenicist, and by B. J. Hendrick, in 1924, from the point of view of the historian, they added little that was new to the stock of prejudices. But the popularity of such books illustrated again the continued hold of this brand of racism upon the contemporary mind. In no small measure that hold was due to the fact that these notions passed current as science. In retrospect, it is amazing to find how little American social scientists of that day saw that was objectionable in those ideas. The tragedy was that few academic sociologists could argue to the contrary; for almost all started with the same undemonstrable assumptions about the nature of the biological differences among human beings.

Through 1927-28 sociologists referred to "nationals" as if they were races. This racist approach can be traced in part to an inherited attitude toward "Blacks" and Indians, which was part of our seventeenth and eighteenth century tradition. It is true that this attitude received competition from the inherent American ideals which culminated in the Civil War, but the earlier racist tradition was then fed a generation or so later by a new set of circumstances which were reflected in the social sciences, in American imperialism after the Spanish-American War, and in the slavish following of European racists by their American imitators.

Like other Americans, these men lived in a society of radical changes, a society which rendered them peculiarly susceptible to racist influences, imported and indigenous. And the very fact that their work reflected these currents of the times gave the ideology they elaborated a wide popular audience.

FIRST FRUITS OF RACISM

BY 1920, a full-fledged racial ideology colored the thinking of many Americans. The conquest of opinion was by no means complete; the traditional American attitude of tolerance still acted as a brake upon the headlong sweep of these new ideas. What was ominous was the support the ideas received from occasional incidents at the practical level.

Significantly, in practice, as in the theory, the Jews were not alone singled out. The racist found equally his enemies all the colored peoples, the Latins, and the Slavs. If the Jews were often the first to draw fire, that was because local circumstances sometimes made them the most prominent targets.

The Pattern of Exclusion. Social mobility has always been an important characteristic of the American scheme for living. A great deal of freedom in the economic structure has made room for the free play of talents and has permitted newcomers to make their way from the lower to the higher rungs in the occupational ladder. In the absence of an hereditary aristocracy, social position has generally accompanied economic position.

Those who occupied the higher places of course always resented the competition from those who climbed out of the lower places. More than a hundred years ago, newspapers were already carrying the injunction over their help-wanted ads, "No Irish Need Apply!"

But the democratic nature of American society made it

difficult permanently to establish such barriers. In the nineteenth century these artificial restraints had always broken down beneath the pressure of the necessity for cooperation at all levels in the community. Furthermore constant expansion in the economic and social structure of the nation made room for newcomers without lowering the position of those already well established. In fact, it often happened that a rise in the level of the immigrants and their children lifted even higher the positions of all those above them.

The earliest encounters of the Jews with this feature of the American social system were not unlike those of members of other ethnic groups who passed through the same process. In adjusting to the American economy, some groups moved upward much more rapidly than others. The Jews were among those who advanced most quickly in earning power and in social position. Their special difficulties arose from the circumstance that they seemed singularly to rise faster than other peoples of recent immigration origin. This success in mobility came at a time when the earlier immigrant groups of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had chosen to forget their own swift rise and extraordinary accumulation of the great fortunes characteristically found among them.

All who mounted the economic ladder earned the resentment of the well-established; but, in their rapid climb, the Jews seemed interlopers, out of place, more often than earlier outsiders moving in the same direction.

Economic power in America was usually enveloped in certain symbols of prestige and position—good family, membership in the appropriate churches and associations, residence in select districts, and participation in communal activities. Success by Jews was resented, not only because the success of every new arrival seemed to leave less room for those already entrenched, but also because success in

their case was not graced with the proper symbols, did not take the proper form.

Furthermore, the rapidity of the climb heightened the sense of difference between Jews and non-Jews at the upper economic levels. Some Jews reached positions of economic power and influence within a single generation, a time-interval not long enough for adequate social adaptation. The contrast in behavior was therefore particularly noticeable. "High society" and its lowlier imitators, uncomfortable at the entrance of any newcomers, in the case of these, could ascribe its discomforts to the difference in manners rather than to an inherent unwillingness to make room for competitors. As in every manifestation of prejudice, the Jew was in the same category as other minorities discriminated against. But his exceptional mobility made him the more prominent and the more vulnerable target.

Exclusion was first prominently expressed in areas that involved the use of leisure time facilities, that is, in vacation places, in clubs, and in social groups of various kinds. Such activities, being less formalized than, say, the activities of business or politics, were open to intimate personal contacts, and therefore felt the strangers' presence more sensitively. What is more, these activities involved the whole family. Unlike the office or the workshop, where each man could deal impersonally and almost anonymously with individuals as individuals, the resort or dance drew in the members of his family and made him more conscious of questions of background and origin.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, many places began to close their doors to Jews. The incident in Saratoga Springs in 1877 when Joseph Seligman was refused accommodations at the Grand Union Hotel was a dramatic precursor of a pattern that would become more familiar in succeeding decades. In the 1890's also appeared a large

number of hereditary prestige societies, which based their membership upon descent from eighteenth-century American ancestors, and which had the effect of excluding most Jews as well as most other Americans, who were descended from immigrants who arrived after 1800.

These social slights ultimately had an effect upon other activities, of course. To the extent that business and political contacts often were made within the realm of the club or society, those who were excluded from the club or society were automatically discriminated against.

And soon that discrimination became more direct. After 1910, as the sons of the immigrant Jews entered more keenly and more noticeably into competition for professional and white collar places in the American economic system, the weight of such prejudice became formal and more open. Newspaper advertisements began specifically to exclude Jews from consideration for certain positions. Access to many professions was arbitrarily if informally limited.

Uneasily many Americans accepted this pattern of discrimination. Although not a few were still conscious enough of their heritage of freedom and equality to protest against the tendency, all too many, lulled by the racist justification of ineradicable differences, were disposed to acquiesce. The formation of the American Jewish Committee in 1906 and of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in 1913 to fight these trends indicated a growing awareness of the seriousness of the problem.

Georgia Blood Bath. What drew attention to the potential menace of all these developments was a sudden eruption that displayed the ugly turn the forces of racism could take. Appropriately enough the eruption came in the South, the source of so much of the festering venom; and appropriately enough it came in the New, not the Old South, in industrial Atlanta rather than in the romantic plantation.

Among the disorganized masses of men thrown together in the American cities, seeming grievances with no hope of redress from "legal" channels often led to violent outbursts of mob action. Many people did not trust their governments, were ready to believe that their police department and courts had sold out to special interests, and, under provocation, were willing to take direct action themselves.

Distinctive minorities were particularly subject to violent reprisals when their actions seemed to run against the cherished patterns of the community, yet involved no clear infraction of the law. In the 1890's, Italians in New Orleans, and Irishmen in Boston had suffered the harsh effects of mob violence.

In 1915 the blow fell upon Leo Frank, a Jewish resident of Atlanta, Georgia. Accused of the murder of a fourteen-year-old girl and convicted on the flimsiest grounds, he was taken from jail and lynched the day after the governor of the state had commuted his sentence.

Many factors combined to draw the web of hatred around Frank's neck. He was a Northerner and an employer of labor, and earned a full share of mistrust on those grounds alone. As a Jew he inherited all the dislikes stirred up by the racist writers of the period, and also the murky suspicions about Jewish blood murders left over from agitation of the Beiliss case a few years earlier. Finally the indignation everywhere outside the state that followed his conviction, and the ultimate commutation of the sentence by the governor raised the suspicion that justice was being frustrated through the intercession of powerful hostile outsiders. Under skillful manipulation, these became the goads that prodded the mob into action.

The manipulation came from Tom Watson. By 1913 this man had a long political career behind him. A sympathizer with the cause of the poor in his own region he had been prominent as a populist and as a leader in the progressive

movements at the turn of the century. But the years after 1900 were a long series of frustrations not only, or not so much, in terms of personal ambitions, but in terms of the success of the program for which he fought. "The world is plunging Hellward," he complained.

In common with many other men of his period, Watson blamed this deterioration upon the interference of outside interests. At first, his hostility focused upon the traditional objective of fundamentalist America, the Roman Catholic Church, and he engaged in a long, bitter campaign of vilification through his journals and books.

But in practice as in theory, prejudice was not easily limited to one group. The Frank case offered an alternative, and Watson transferred the identical arguments he was using against the Catholics to the Jews. He rallied his followers with the slogan that Frank must be executed to eliminate outside Jewish interference from Georgia.

In an immediate sense, Watson was successful. Frank died and Watson himself rode to continued political power on the basis of his leadership in the anti-Semitic campaign. Local bitterness raised by the issue persisted for many years.

Yet the very violence of the terms Watson used, the very barbarousness of the methods of his mob revolted the great mass of Americans outside his state. The rude gallows at Marietta, Georgia cast a sombre shadow across the land, a premonitory warning of what might develop.

Then came the war, and the presence of an enemy from without, for a time, seemed to still internal dissensions. Jews contributed with their fellow citizens to the winning of the struggle, and their participation was officially recognized by the government through such agencies as the Jewish Welfare Board. What was more, the very slogans in terms of which the war was fought seemed to rebuke those who promoted intolerance at home.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR, AND OF DEPRESSION

IF the war brought peace, the peace unloosed the bitter passions of disappointment and betrayal. The outcome of the conflict was so different from the aims in terms of which sacrifices had been made that millions of Americans, feeling cheated, turned against the aims themselves.

In the five years after the armistice, the United States seemed to wish to draw back into a chauvinistic isolation, to cut its ties with the rest of the world, and to forget not only the phrases but also the ideals that had sparked the war effort. Rejection of the League of Nations and the World Court, and the high tariff system were symptoms of this deep drive.

Perhaps even more important, was the final reversal between 1920 and 1924 of the historic immigration policy. In those years, the number of new entrants was not only cut drastically, but cut in terms of a crude racist philosophy that set up standards of desirability for all the people of the world, counting some high, some low, almost exactly as Madison Grant had counselled.

The consequences for the American social and economic system were drastic. With no more newcomers, expansion slackened, and before long there was a noticeable contraction in the range of opportunities. Between 1920 and 1940, for instance, the number of practitioners in certain professions remained almost stationary. That meant that competition for the desirable places became sharper than ever. If the number of doctors did not grow, every new Jewish doctor deprived the son of a gentile of his place.

In the 1920's almost every leading American college and university, formally or informally, adopted a quota system for Jewish students. Unofficial regulatory agencies made difficult the way into almost every profession. In 1944 and 1945, some representative groups in the fields of dentistry and psychiatry went so far as openly to propose a quota system in those fields. Everywhere, the difficulty of securing desirable employment constantly became more oppressive.

In those years, too, the pattern of exclusion extended into the field of housing. Whole areas of many cities, through voluntary covenants of real estate owners, were abruptly closed to persons of "Hebrew descent."

While these effects were still being felt, the depression after 1929 struck a blow at the stability of the American economy from which there was no recovery for almost a decade. Through the thirties, close to ten million unemployed men and their families lived by the insecure margin of public relief or of charity, and remained the prey of all sorts of demagogues ready to capitalize upon their fears.

"The International Jew." Immediately after the first world war, the overt signs of hostility to the Jews centered on their "foreign" qualities. The xenophobia that seemed to seep into every corner of American life also affected the Jews.

The most flamboyant preachers of 100 per cent Americanism were the members of the latter-day Ku Klux Klan. This obscure organization had started in the South shortly before the war. It assumed the title of the old Reconstruction bands, made popular by a film that had just swept the country, D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. The new Klan operated first as a simple racket for fleecing the gullible through a fancy price on sheet-uniforms. But between 1920 and 1925 the Order grew and spread, until it attained a membership of close to four million, heavily concentrated in the North, and particularly in the states of Oregon, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

The Klan found its leading antagonist in the Pope; in that respect it fell into the tradition of confusing issues by identifying Catholicism with internationalism. But it had hatred enough left over for the Jews, also touched by international affiliations, and for the Negroes who were vulnerable enough not to need a pretext.

Undoubtedly the Kluxers were influenced in their anti-Semitism by the circulation, in this country, of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This evil little volume, an obvious forgery, that we now know was used by the Czarist secret police, purported to record the proceedings, in Prague, of a secret body, plotting to capture the world on behalf of international Jewry. That this flimsy story, so clearly fraudulent on the face of it, should pass through edition after edition, and find credence among thousands of well-intentioned, if uncritical, American citizens may seem amazing. It is perhaps a commentary upon the insecurity and uncertainty of the world in which they lived, a world in which truth was not separate from fiction and in which promise did lead to betrayal.

By 1928, however, people, no matter how insecure, were no longer likely to phrase their fears in terms of an international menace to the United States. Disarmament treaties and the Kellogg Pact, after all, had made the nation safe from attack from without; prosperity kept it sound against attack from within. A token of this turn of events was the disintegration of the once powerful Klan.

The Shadow of Hitlerism. The advent of the Nazis to power had a double effect. It was one of the disturbing elements that upset the stability of Europe and of the world and that revived all the American fears of involvement in foreign quarrels. More directly, the accession of the National Socialists to power gave control of a sovereign government to a group that was aggressively interested in spreading anti-Semitic ideas throughout the world.

Hitler's primary agents in this mission in the United States were German-Americans, rigidly organized. Large numbers of Germans, many veterans of the Kaiser's army, and many still imbued with national pride, had entered the United States in the 20's under the quota laws of 1920-1924 which had granted the Germans a high percentage of our immigration quota.

Some of these people had early joined in patriotic societies such as the Teutonia; but these groups had been small in number and short in purse. After 1932 however, they had the support of agencies of the German government, from which they secured organizational leadership, funds, and a steady stream of propaganda to be spread through the United States.

Many German-Americans were first drawn to these societies through simple fraternal and nationalistic motives. But as the German government plunged ever deeper into the path of anti-Semitism to the horror of the rest of the

civilized world, defense of Germany tended to become defense of anti-Semitism. Before long it seemed the only way to uphold the good name of the Germans, wherever they were, was to stand by the Fatherland, to convince others that the Nazi persecution of the Jews was necessary to save western civilization from the menace of world Jewry.

Hitler had not been in power for a year when the American societies were reorganized and centralized in the Friends of the New Germany, later known as the German-American Bund. Under the successive leadership of Heinz Spanknoebel, Fritz Gissibl, Fritz Kuhn, and Wilhelm Kunze, the Bund set itself the task of popularizing the doctrines of Hitler's new order. Through newspapers and books, inspired from abroad, the stock libels about the Jews were given currency. Camps maintained the morale of the members, and public meetings served to infect outsiders.

A great part of the early financial support for these activities came from the German government. In this respect, the Bund was a Nazi agency. In furthering Hitlerite objectives, it performed, on the direct operational level, the same function that was being performed, on a more respectable level, by George Sylvester Viereck and Flanders Hall.

Elements of American Fascism. Hitler did not have to rely exclusively upon Germans to do his work for him in the United States. There were native tools at hand willing, for their own interests, to serve his purposes.

Among the insecure groups rendered more insecure by the depression were millions of men ready to be enlisted in a crusade, men awaiting some call to salvation. They wanted mostly something about which they could be enthusiastic, something in which they could believe, and which would bring the promise of security. Out of such cravings came the support for all sorts of new movements untouched by

any trace of anti-Semitism, the Townsend Plan, for example, or EPIC in California.

It was significant that the vast majority of men who participated in such drives did not respond to bigoted appeals and labored to attain their economic ends without relying upon the support of group hatred. Yet in this inchoate mass of distressed people, a small proportion did respond to appeals that were clearly fascist in nature and that were often oriented around anti-Semitic programs. Between 1933 and 1939 some hundred organizations, large and small, drew together the Jew haters into a potentially dangerous force.

There was no consistency to these groups, except their common confusion and inconsistency. While all were insecure people, the sources of their insecurity were markedly diverse.

There were some, for instance, who carried on in the spirit of the twenties, chauvinists, foes of the "international" Jew, striving for purity of the American race, hostile to anything alien. These people were most numerous in the South and Middle West, the old Klan territory. They were Protestants, often fundamentalist in religion, and terrified at the disappearance of an American way of life that had never existed. They joined William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts and the revived Klan, or became the audience of the Geraldts (Smith and Winrod).

Another fund of discontent was different in origin but similar in expression. The Catholics, particularly of the second and third generation, had the same economic difficulties as other marginal groups in the thirties, and emerged with the same feelings of insecurity, the same search for an alternative. But the Catholics had had a long history of experience with bigotry in the United States, and had reasons in plenty for distrusting this aspect of the American

spirit. Despite this, anti-Semitism made some headway among them.

A leader in this movement was Father Charles E. Coughlin who had gained an enormous radio audience before 1936 by focusing his sermons on economic questions, and by support of the New Deal. Shortly after his break with President Roosevelt, he used his radio time and the columns of his newspaper, *Social Justice*, to attack the Jews. His stock in trade was the same international plot of communists and bankers to hand over the world to the Jews. In 1938, Father Coughlin's followers gathered into organizations which subsequently became the Christian Front. Among the leadership was Father Curran often referred to as Father Coughlin's Eastern Representative, John F. Cassidy and Francis P. Moran. The Christian Front not only spread the then current anti-Semitic propaganda, but also held provocative meetings. The war later drove such groups to cover.

The diversity of the sources from which these anti-Semitic groups sprang helps to account for the fact that they were never able to unite, to eliminate conflicts among rival leaders, and to pool interests and support. While some of these organizations were able to draw upon substantial financial support from time to time, their total effects tended to cancel out each other. Most of them did not survive the war, which cast the suspicion of disloyalty upon them.

They were not without effect however. Even in more respectable places there was, in the years before Pearl Harbor, an unprecedented willingness to raise the Jewish issue as such, in reference to politics and to international affairs. As the prospect of war became more real, month after month in 1941, many well-meaning people, committed to keeping the country neutral, succumbed to the temptation of using a

fictitious Jewish issue for their own ends. Men like Charles A. Lindbergh, and Senator Nye expressed themselves in terms that raised questions as to their motivations.

It was shocking in 1933 to hear Congressman MacFadden of Pennsylvania use the halls of the Capitol as a sounding board for anti-Semitic charges. But eight years later, it was commonplace to find Congressmen Thorkelson and Rankin, in the boldest terms, ascribing American participation in the war of 1941 to nefarious Jewish influences.

EVERY PERSON'S COUNTRY

TO look at it now, an ugly stain appears upon the fabric of American society. The stain is out of harmony with the complexion of the whole fabric. It jars. It will not stay as it is.

The stain was not always there. It was not woven in with the warp and woof of the cloth, but imposed later. How and why, we know.

Still the cloth is no longer the same, and cannot stay as it is. Will the whole cloth be dyed to match the color of the stain? Or can we, in time, eradicate the stain, restore the original nature? A good deal depends upon the answer.

"We know, properly speaking, no strangers. This is every person's country." Such was the boast of Americans a century and a half ago. Jews no less than others, no differently from others, found here their home.

This tolerance, this open attitude toward new ideas and new influences was founded upon confidence. Americans believed in the destiny of their country and of its institutions. They knew they had nothing to fear save ignorance and fear. Who was their enemy when they were every man's friend?

Little more than fifty years ago, that confidence was shaken. There were men in the United States who no longer had faith in what the future might bring. And their fears bred dark and atavistic hatreds.

The consequences have since unfolded before us—enough at home, the full length across the ocean.

In this perspective, the problem seems simple. Do we have enough faith in America, once more to say, “We know, properly speaking, no strangers. This is every person’s country.”

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